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ABSTRACT

Hawaii's executive branch initiated on February 1, 1990, a large-scale plan to relieve the problem of "latch key children" with an afterschool supervised program. Since the legislature had not appropriated funds to establish the program, the governor chose to finance it from monies paid by the United States as compensation for federally connected students who attend public schools. Each elementary school conducted a survey to determine parental interest in the program. Out of a possible 176 sites, 170 were authorized to carry out the "A+ Program." A total of 15,503 children were enrolled, of whom approximately 4,100 received tuition waivers for the \$23 per month tuition. A large majority of the parents, 99 percent of 11,600 surveyed at the conclusion of the 4-month pilot program, were satisfied with the program's quality. Problems that the legislature will be forced ultimately to decide include the following: (1) the program only operates during regular school days; (2) the program is only available to students who attend public schools; and (3) private providers of afterschool care complained that the actions of the state would jeopardize their livelihood and are a form of unfair competition. (MLF)

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The A+ After School Program in Hawaii

by John A. Thompson

The power of the executive branch in a centralized state like Hawaii is truly awesome. There had been discussions for several years among groups, both within the state and city and country governments and in the private sector, about the problems of "latch key" children. Nothing concret had been done to attempt to resolve the problem. Then, one year before the gubernatorial election, in which both the governor and the lieutenant governor were standing for re-election, a large-scale plan to relieve the problem was floated from the executive branch of the government.

It came without public discussion or even prior legislative consultation or authorization. The board of education was not apprised of the plan. Yet, it was planned in some detail, for example, the salary scale for the various types of personnel who would be carrying out the after school program, and the cost of the after school snack.

The need for after school care was undeniable. On the island of Oahu, 67% of families had two full-time wage earners. In the state as a whole, over 50% of the households had both the father and mother employed. In addition, nearly 100% of the single parent families were employed.

Private providers have been involved in after school care for a number of years. The providers varied from non-profit, traditional care givers for young children such as the YMCA; to some for profit groups such as Hawaii Ventures. There were

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approximately 30 sites for these providers in the state. Several were in areas with high concentration of young children such as military installations or urban areas. However, since these sites were for the most part not located at or near the schools which the students attended, there were problems associated with transportation as well as programs for the students attending.

While there were wide fluctuations in cost to the parents among the groups, the lieutenant governor's office estimated the average cost to be approximately \$100 per month per child, well beyond the means of many working parents.

The governor's office announced on November 1, 1989 that it had a plan which would go into effect on February 1, 1990. The plan had several goals:

1. To provide after-school supervision for children in a stimulating and caring environment.
2. To reduce the number of latchkey children.
3. To expand and reinforce learning experiences.
4. To improve the physical fitness of children.
5. To better utilize school facilities.

After several days of indecision over what agency of the state government should operate the program, it was finally assigned to the Board of Education and its operational arm, the Department of Education (DOE).

Since the legislature had not appropriated funds to establish this program during the previous session and would not go into session until nine days before the commencement of the program, the

questions raised in the press and by legislators was how would the program be funded? The governor had a ready answer. The monies which are paid by the United States as compensation for federally connected students who attend public schools under Public Law 876 do not go to the school district in Hawaii. Rather they are placed into the state general fund as unappropriated funds. The governor can expend these funds without the authorization of the legislature, which he was prepared to do.

The original estimated costs for one semester of the program was to be 3.4 million dollars which matched the amount left in the unappropriated fund. Any additional costs would be raised by levying a monthly assessment (tuition?) to be paid by parents who enrolled their child(ren).

Rules and Regulations

To be eligible for enrollment in the A+ program:

1. A child must attend a public school;
2. Both parents in the home; or if he/she is from a single-parent household, the parent living with the child must either be employed, attending school, or in a job training program;
3. Children of parents working the program are also eligible;
4. Children served were enrolled in grades K-6;
5. The program was voluntary, not mandatory, so that each parent(s) was to pay a cost of \$23.00 per month per child to be enrolled. Children who qualified for free or

reduced price school lunches were granted a tuition waiver.

Each elementary school conducted a survey to determine the interest of parents in the program. The result was that 170 sites, out of a possible 176, were authorized to carry out an A+ program. A total of 15,503 children were enrolled. Approximately 4,100 students received tuition waivers. As might be expected the greatest percentage of the students were in grades K-2 (56.7%) while grades five and six only enrolled 14%.

The Program

The after school program provided services only on regular school days. Thus, on state holidays, which are often not celebrated by private employers, Christmas and spring break, teacher institute days, etc., there was no program. Likewise none during the summer vacation. Each site had a coordinator, who may or may not, have been the principal of the school, or even a school employee.

Group leaders and aides carried out the actual program activities. Efforts were made to attract teachers in the schools to be leaders, but less than 50% were regular employees of the schools.

The actual program of activities varied from school to school. However, there were several requirements for all the schools.

1. There would be a physical education component at the beginning of the after school period. This activity was carried out by aides since many of the group leaders were

teachers. Since their preparation periods were after the students were dismissed, they could not be present for approximately three-quarters of an hour after students were dismissed. Thus, the aides would be with students during that period.

2. There was an Enrichment Component which was designed to enhance the academic components of the regular school day. There were arts and crafts, literature, mathematics and science, etc. They were supposed to be taught in an exploratory mode. No student was to be forced to participate. Units on health and hygiene were also included. For many students, it was a period in which they could have supervised homework preparation.

Each child had a snack that was prepared by the lunchroom personnel. The cost was included in the monthly fee.

All of the activities were carried out between 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. At that time, parents were to pick up the children. If they were late, they were charged a five dollar per occurrence fee.

Resources for 1990

The first act passed in the 1990 legislative session was A+ Act. The act provided for a pilot program "to operate from February 5, 1990 through the last full day of the current school year on each regular school day from the close of the regular school day until 5:30 p.m." (Act 1 Session Laws Fifteenth State Legislature Regular Session). "The Program shall be limited to students enrolled in kindergarten through grade six who, unless

otherwise exempt, pay a non-refundable fee of \$23 in advance each month" (Ibid.). The legislature appropriated \$5,655,000 to fund the costs of the pilot program from the state general fund.

However, the costs to the state was reduced by \$1,048,892, which represented the \$23 per month fee collected from 11,401 of the total of 15,501 students who were enrolled in the program. Approximately 27% or 4,100 students received tuition waivers based upon the fact that they qualified for free or reduced free lunch under the federal Child Care Food Program Section 226.2, Section 17 of the National School Lunch Act (7CFR Part 226).

Under the accounting procedures of the State of Hawaii, the funds collected are not placed in an impress or revolving fund. Instead, the money is returned to the state general fund. Thus, it might be looked upon as either a tax on the parents or a user fee, since it actually reduces the cost of the program to the taxpayers of the state by approximately 18.5 percent. The funds also become a part of the non-budgeted funds which the governor can use to fund other programs; or in this case, to begin the funding of the 1990-91 A+ program.

The costs per pupil of the pilot A+ program for the 1990 school year (four months) was \$364, or 91.20 per pupil per month. The hourly cost of \$1.52 per pupil is approximately half of the costs incurred during the instructional day.

Some Problems That Were Encountered

A large majority of the parents, 99% of 11,600 who were surveyed at the conclusion of the four-month pilot program, were

satisfied with the quality of A+ Program. Certainly that degree of approbation bodes well for the continuation of the program. That is makit it a part of the Department of Education's biannual budget, which by the Hawaii appropriations procedure will make it a permanent program within the Department of Education.

There are three problems related to the program that the legislature will be forced ultimately to decide, since each has budgetory implications. They are:

1. The program only operated during regular school days. There was and will continue to be a clamor by parents to have it operate year around. This has enormous fiscal ramifications relative to securing personnel during the time that teachers are not under contract during the summer. The same is true for cafeteria workers and for custodians; it will mean additional overtime.
2. At present the A+ Program is only available to students who attend the public schools. Since approximately 25% of the parents send their children to non-public schools, many of which have quite small enrollments, there is pressure to allow all children to attend.

The state used a clause in the Hawaii State Constitution, Article X, Section 1, "There shall be no discrimination in public educational institutions because of race, religion, sex, or ancestry, nor shall public funds be appropriated for the support or benefit of any sectarian or private educational institution, and a case

which interpreted the clause, *Spears v. Honda* 449P. 2nd 130 as the justification for excluding these students. The argument is rather specious since the program certainly might be viewed as a type of dual enrollment which the courts in other states have tended not to find constitutionally offensive.

The costs to include these students would have a major impact on the program. It would entail some form of transportation to move the children to the public school sites as well as the normal program costs (see *Spears v. Honda* supra).

3. As reported earlier, there are several private providers who have been furnishing after-school care for many years. Their fees are, of course, much higher than the tuition of \$23 per month that the state charged parents in A+. They have complained vociferously to the legislature that the actions of the state would jeopardize their livelihood and are a form of unfair competition.

The governor's office and the Department of Education have taken note of these complaints. For the 1990-91 program (for which no money has yet been appropriated by the legislature), private providers had the opportunity to bid to conduct the A+ program on 30 campuses. This presents an interesting constitutional situation since some of the providers are religious organizations who will be operating on public school campuses.

The writer had hoped to make a cost-benefit analysis on the public and private providers. However, the Department of Education will not release any cost information until after the 1990-91 school year has been completed (and after the legislature in its session that ends in April 1991 has voted to make the A+ Program a permanent part of the Department of Education).

It is clear that this program is serving a purpose in the community. However, the problems cited above are indications that it is not meeting at least some of the needs of certain sub-populations of parents. Also, it is unclear whether the costs attached to A+ are reasonable. For instance, it might be more efficient to privatize the entire operation. For example, two of the group leaders have been accused of molesting children. If they are convicted, the state will certainly be involved in significant litigation for damages.

Also, at present, private providers do not pay rental for the use of the school facilities for the program. Thus, there is a real need to perform an analysis on the question of whether the program should be handled by private groups with a subsidy from the state. One would hope such information will be available to present to the 1992 AEFA Convention.